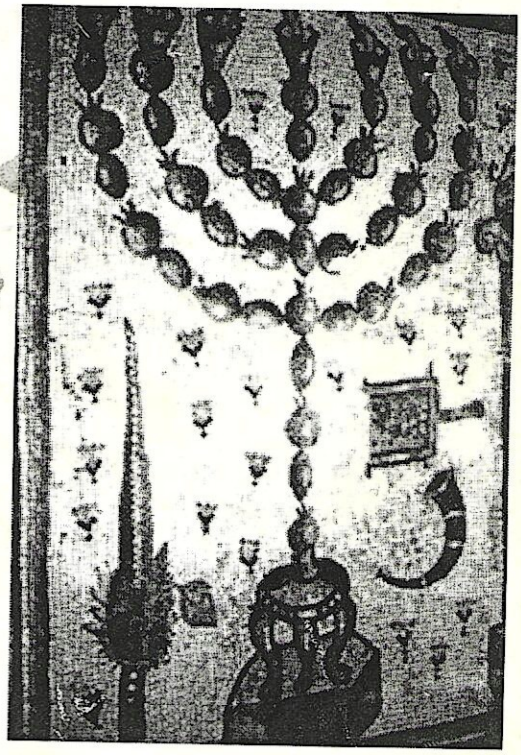
B'not Mitzvah

Julia Barsha Tejblum
and
Rebecca Anna Rudnick Zeldin



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Behar-Behukotai

Adas Israel Congregation

Rabbi Jeffrey A. Wohlberg
Rabbi Avis D. Miller

Cantor Arnold Saltzman
Cantor Maurice Singer

Shabbat Shalom

Welcome to Adas Israel Congregation. Established in 1869, Adas Israel, "The community of Israel," is the largest Conservative congregation in the Washington area. We are delighted to have you worship with our family on this special day when Julia and Rebecca are called to the Torah as B'not Mitzvah.

The Meaning of Bat Mitzvah

The Bat Mitzvah for young women is equivalent to the Bar Mitzvah ceremony for young men, which originated in the fourteenth century. "Bar Mitzvah," literally "Son of the Commandment," signifies the important passage from childhood to adulthood -- the point at which a child begins to undertake religious responsibilities. The Talmud, the major interpretive work on Jewish law compiled 2,000 years ago, regards the age of maturity as coinciding with the onset of physical maturity, around the age of 12 or 13.

The Bat Mitzvah ceremony originated in the United States in 1922. The late Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, was an advocate of women's rights. As the father of daughters, Rabbi Kaplan sought a meaningful way to mark their formal entrance into Jewish religious life. He created the ceremony of Bat Mitzvah -- "Daughter of the Commandment."

Our daughters now assume the privileges and obligations of being Jewish adults. They may be counted in a Minyan, the quorum of ten adults required to hold a public prayer service. They may lead prayer and chant from the Torah. They take moral responsibility for their obligations.

The Service

The service today is the traditional Saturday morning service. As men enter the sanctuary, they cover their heads with a Kippah (skullcap) as a sign of respect for G-d. Some women may choose to cover their heads with a Kippah or other head

covering. Jewish men and some Jewish women wear a Tallit (prayer shawl) to remind us of our obligations to G-d. As a sign of respect, it is customary for all present to stand whenever the Ark, which holds the Torah scrolls, is open and when the Torah is lifted or carried.

The prayers, which have been recited by Jews for centuries, can be found in the *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* (Siddur) at your seats. During the service, we will also read from the Torah (the *Five Books of Moses*) and from the prophet Malachai. These readings are found in The *Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (Chumash), the larger book also found at your seats. Both the Siddur and the Chumash are written in English and Hebrew and are paginated from right to left.

The Sabbath service is divided into four parts: **Psukei de Zimra, Shacharit, the Torah Service, and Musaf**. The Bat Mitzvah ceremony is incorporated into the Torah Service.

Psukei de Zimra (pp. 42-86) is taken primarily from the Book of Psalms and is intended to create a mood for prayer.

Shacharit (pp. 86-116) is the formal morning service. At the core of this section is the Shema, a proclamation of monotheism at the core of Jewish belief: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One." The other major element of the Shacharit service, the Amidah (pp. 96-101) consists of prayers emphasizing the holiness of the Sabbath and ends with a prayer for peace.

The **Torah Service** is the heart of the Sabbath morning worship service and is the portion around which the Bat Mitzvah ceremony revolves. The Torah is the parchment scroll on which the *Five Books of Moses* are hand copied, as they have been for 3,000 years. It is the holiest ritual object in Jewish tradition, proclaiming the basic history, laws, culture, ethics, and way of life of the Jewish people. Its handling and reading are marked with ceremony and reverence. Furthermore, because the Torah is written in a distinct script without vowels, punctuation, or musical symbols, special training is required to read and chant from it.

On the Sabbath, the Torah reading is divided into seven sections. Each section is preceded and followed by a blessing of thanks for the gift of the Torah. The honor of being called to recite these blessings is referred to as an Aliyah, which means "going up." Before reciting the blessings, the person being honored touches the side of the Torah, using either the Tallit, prayer book, or the tie that is used to wrap the scroll, and then kisses the Tallit, prayer book, or tie as a sign of love and respect for the Torah. After the Aliyah, the person remains at the Torah during the next reading as a sign of reluctance to leave the Torah.

During the Torah service, Julia and Rebecca each will be presented with a Tallit. The Tallit fulfills the Biblical commandments that Jews place fringes on the corners of their garments as reminders of their Jewish obligations.

Julia and Rebecca each will be called to the Torah to chant part of today's portion, which is the concluding section of the Book of Leviticus, known as Behar-Behukotai. At Adas Israel, one third of each week's Torah portion is read, according to the custom known as the triennial cycle. This year, we are reading the last third of the portion, which begins on page 547 of the Chumash. Members of our families, as well as members of the congregation, will participate in today's Torah service.

Behar and Behukotai each contain important commandments from G-d to the Jewish people. In Behar, the people are commanded to observe a Sabbath of the land every seventh year, during which time the land is not to be cultivated. In addition, on the day of atonement after the seven Sabbaths of the land (in the fiftieth year), the people are commanded to celebrate a Jubilee year, during which slaves are to be freed and the land is to be returned to its original owners. The inscription on the Liberty Bell, "Proclaim liberty through the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," was taken from this text. Behukotai, the concluding section of Leviticus, revolves around a central theme that G-d will bless and reward the faithful and punish the wicked. The portion that Julia and Rebecca will be reading discusses the methodology for determining the value of voluntary contributions to the Temple. At the conclusion of the

Torah reading, the congregation will stand and recite in Hebrew, "Chazak, chazak, v'nitzhazak." This is an expression of celebration for completing the reading of a book of the Torah, and of encouragement that we may have the strength ("chazak") to continue the study of Torah.

Rebecca and Julia each will chant half of the Haftorah, found on page 551 of the Chumash. Today's Haftorah is from the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet who witnessed the destruction of the Temple in 587 BCE and the exile of the Jews to Bablyon. After the destruction of the Temple, Jeremiah changed from a prophet of doom to one of hope. That message of hope is presented in today's Haftorah, and summarized in the last sentence: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise."

After the Haftorah, Julia and Rebecca will lead the congregation in the singing of Ashrei (Psalm 145). The Torah service concludes with the return of the Torah to the Ark.

The Torah service is followed by a sermon, which will be delivered by Rabbi Miller.

Musaf (pp. 137-162), literally the "additional" service, concludes the Sabbath morning service. After Musaf, from the Bima, Julia and Rebecca will recite the Kiddush (blessing) over the wine, and Ben and Alexander will recite the Motzi over the bread. After the services, we look forward to greeting you at the Kiddush downstairs in the Kay Hall, sponsored by Julia's grandparents, Harvey and Sonya Barsha and Shula Tejblum, and Rebecca's grandparents, David and Lila Rudnick and Benjamin and Beverly Zeldin.

Shabbat Shalom - May the Sabbath bring you peace!

Miguel, Carol, Julia and Ben
Michael, Amy, Rebecca and Alexander